

NEWS to me.

By Scottie Lanahan

Are You Playing the Games

CPYRGHT By the Rules in Washington?

OLD-FASHIONED parlor games, according to actress Phyllis Newman, are currently the rage among the fashionable folk in Manhattan.

No one is asked until after dinner, because "dinner is so dissipating," and games are played, like hiding wedding rings and pieces of spaghetti around the living-room.

Well, here in Washington it is very seldom that one is invited to play formal games, though I have heard that charades are sometimes played at Hickory Hill. There is a simple reason for this, which is that we play so many informal before, during, and after dinner, we haven't time for the other kind.

One of our favorite games is called Quote, which to be played properly requires a good deal of preparation.

The Washington Post, the Star, the New York Times, Time, Newsweek, the New Republic, Look, Harper's and Ramparts are required reading, but it is important to add optionals. Here's a typical round:

X: Lippmann was right on target today, I thought.

Y: Reston had a lot more meat, though. I'm beginning to take his view.

X: I'm sure you saw Galbraith in the New York Review of Books. A little glib, perhaps, but to the point.

Y: Not as much as Cyril Connolly in Encounter. The British have such a flair for this sort of thing.

X: Oh, he didn't pinpoint the problem half as well as Arthur Schlesinger in Playboy.

By introducing Playboy, X has left Y with absolutely nothing to say, and therefore won the round. The object of the game is to keep topping your opponent until he is forced to change the conversation.

The most artistic practitioner of this game is Cord Meyer, the walking library who was recently revealed to have been running student activities all these years for the CIA.

Let us suppose that some innocent creature, coming upon Cord on a

Georgetown terrace at the cocktail hour, remarks the Manchester Guardian has been somewhat unflattering about the handling of the Flamingo Republic crisis by the CIA.

"My dear fellow," Cord will say with a significant puff on his pipe, "I assume you have seen Yevtuchenko's masterwork on this subject in the Trans-crimean Review, 'Phenomenism versus Pantheism.' Otherwise, there is no use addressing yourself to this topic, don't you agree?"

One stroke, and he's won. The victim admits defeat by inquiring how his children are, and whether he's played any tennis lately.

WE HAVE ALL learned to enjoy the President's favorite game, which is suggesting that he's going to appoint somebody to an important post, letting all the columnists speculate on what this appointment will mean, then months later appointing somebody else.

This is translated, in Washington living-rooms, into the game of Who Knows What.

"I hear Bobby and Teddy are having a falling out," says A to B. "I hear Teddy wants to be the one to run in '72, and he feels if Bobby runs in '68, then people will confuse them."

"Nonsense," says B. "At the Harrimans' last night, I heard Bobby has already asked Teddy to be his Secretary of State, unless Steve Smith wants the job."

A is effectively silenced, because what you heard is a good deal less important than where you heard it.

If you can say, for instance, "At Lorraine Cooper's dinner the other evening, the word was that we're ending the war in Vietnam and invading Bermuda," you'll be taken just as seriously as if the rumor had come right out of the horse's mouth.

By the way, why is it horses are supposed to be so communicative?

THEN THERE'S the continually played Washington game of Who Matters. For this game one must be on one's toes, quick-witted, and utterly lacking in self-consciousness.

It consists in walking into a party and deciding instantly, before you even have your first drink, who in the room is important to you for business, social, or any other reasons. The game is getting to that person without being obvious about it.

Newspaper people rarely win this game, because the temptation to make connections with the objects of their daily efforts proves irresistible after five minutes of chatting with an old friend who's not important.

Women who wish to make a splash as hostesses are generally more adept, finding themselves accidentally back-to-back with Margie McNamara only after a decent interval.

THERE'S ONE more game which has only become popular recently, but which seems to be here to stay. That's the one about who's read which books by Washington authors before their publication.

Mrs. Arthur W. Gardner is the undisputed champion at this game, having read the books by Philip Geyelin, by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, and by Charles Bartlett and Ted Weintal, all before they were published.

It is not known how she obtained all the manuscripts, but her reputation is so established that Sen. Claiborne Pell last week sent her an advance copy of his new book on transportation, which he failed to do to any of his other friends.

It's all a lot more fun, and a lot more fun than hiding a wedding ring or a piece of spaghetti in one's living room, whatever Phyllis Newman says. And the wonderful thing about Washington is that here, you generally get dinner with your games, as well.